

Remarks by retired PWEA Member and a past President of PWEA Bonnie Klakowicz to the PWCS School Board on 2/7/18

Today, I have been asked to speak for a large community of Reagan MS Teachers. This is their story that they have asked me to share.

Silence implies compliance and we can be silent no more. We have thought a great deal about the state of our school. We love our students, parents, and fellow teachers and staff. However, our administrative team has left us gravely concerned. We are in a state of reactionary leadership that aims to silence the thoughts of a once-thriving school community. We want to be a part of an environment where the leadership is working to push students and teachers up and forward, instead of down and out. In the darkness, we have lost our way and we pray our lights can be turned back on. We are certain greatness still exists in this world, but to return to it, you must know what our environment has been for the last three years.

Teachers are belittled, told repeatedly that they are incompetent and unimportant. They are told to remain silent during special education meetings with parents, to elevate grades to minimize parental pressures, and to do what they are told. It has been made clear that to question their authority has and will result in disciplinary action. Last year, teachers were asked to sign formal evaluations that never occurred, and this year they were told it was their fault if they did not remind their supervising administrator of their annual performance evaluations.

Poor communication is the driver of our chaos with last minute notices acting as the norm. Teachers have not seen survey results since the administration has been in office. What we have been told is that problems within our building have been caused by us. Often, parents know about major policy changes and issues at our school, prior to us. Ultimately, it is all in effort to appear as if the administrative team is forth right and communication – this is a mirage.

Our leadership is nonexistent in our school. They cannot be seen in the hallways in their self-assigned lunch duties, in the classroom, or during our collaborative learning team meetings. They do not know our students and our students do not know them. We are provided regulations at every meeting and we are expected to silent comply. Many staff members have been denied personal leave and have been told they, the administrators, must know what the leave is for – completely missing the term “personal.”

Our students perform at high-levels due to the dedication of our teachers; however, they can give no more. We have masked our abusive leadership with smiles, positive comments, and encouragement out of fear of influencing the young minds before us. But, unfortunately, they have begun to notice. There is

no way for us to fully disguise this level of mismanagement. Because the staff here is, by and large, so incredibly professional, administration has been sheltered from the public scrutiny it deserves.

Under the current leadership, creativity is stifled, expertise is neglected, and highly-skilled and educated professionals are not able to reach their potential. There is no doubt that this is influencing student learning and achievement, especially in their social-emotional development. On one such occasion, teachers were questioned as to why writing was occurring in non-language arts classrooms, and why students would need to know how to annotate. In essence, if it isn't tested it shouldn't be taught. The rigor and relevance of instruction is lost on this administration.

Our students are successful in spite of our leadership, not because of it. We have watched in horror as students have been singled out and berated by our administrators. To our shock, the bullies in our mist are not the young and inexperienced, but rather the calculated and untrustworthy. We are here for children, but they appear to be low on our administration's priority list.

This year will mark the first time for many of our teachers that transfer will be marked on their letters of intent. It is with a heavy heart that they will leave. We have watched as teachers have become ill, scared, and in some cases are forced to exit. People are changing the course of their careers and making major life decisions due to the inabilities and mismanagement of a couple individuals. It is a toxic environment, where the tension is almost palpable.

Please know that we have spoken in generalities as the stories are too numerous to share in this forum. We implore you to read our survey results, as each of us, has detailed stories, that at one time we thought were isolated events.

We are reminded that sometimes injustice stands on the backs of good men. Sometimes those good men fail and other times they slowly rise, pushing injustice back to its place. This is the time for good men. This is the time for injustice to remain grounded. This is not the time where our administrators can be moved to another school. The answer cannot simply be remove and replace. Our children are worth more than that. No school, no student, not teacher, and no parent should ever be where we currently are. We thank you for your time, and we look forward to your action.

With hope,

Numerous Reagan Teachers.